

**RHODE ISLAND DIVISION OF STATEWIDE PLANNING
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
November 18, 2021**

William E. Powers Building, Conference Room A –
Second Floor - One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

DRAFT MINUTES

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Walker called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. and then gave an overview of the procedures on how the meeting will be conducted.

Roll Call:

Members Present

Mr. Michael Walker, Chair	Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
Ms. Linsey Callaghan	Assistant Chief, Division of Statewide Planning
Mr. Michael Wood	Town of Burrillville
Mr. Gregory Nordin	RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)
Mr. Jason Pezzullo	Cranston Planning Department
Ms. Martina Haggerty	City of Providence
Ms. Pamela Cotter	RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT)
Mr. Timothy Scanlon	Construction Industries of Rhode Island
Ms. Chelsea Siefert	Representing Steven J. King, P.E., Quonset Development Corporation
Ms. Karen Slattery	RI Department of Environmental Management
Mr. David Freeman, P.E.	American Council of Engineering Companies for RI
Ms. Mary Parella	Child Opportunity Zone of Pawtucket
Mr. James Moran	City of East Providence
Ms. Rachel Calabro	Representing Mia Patriarca, RI Department of Health

Members Absent

Ms. Jan Brodie	The Pawtucket Foundation
Mr. Michael Cassidy	Public Member
Ms. Dinalyn Spears	Narragansett Indian Tribe
Ms. Betty Robson	J.F. Moran / JWU
Mr. Raymond Watson	Providence Cultural Equity Initiative
Ms. Bari Freeman	Bike Newport
Mr. John Flaherty	Grow Smart Rhode Island
Mr. Lloyd Albert	AAA Northeast
Mr. Dan Porter	RI Airport Corporation

Staff Present:

Division of Statewide Planning

Meredith Brady, Associate Director

Linsey Callaghan, Assistant Chief

Michael D'Alessandro, Supervising Planner

Benny Bergantino, Principal Planner

Mason Perrone, Principal Planner

RIDOT

Ken White, Principal Financial Analyst

RIPTA

Sarah Ingle, Director of Long-Range Planning

Joelle Kanter, Planner

Zachary Agush, Capital Planner (remote)

Public Comment

- None.

August 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes – for Action

- Chair Walker asked if anyone had comments, corrections or modifications on the August 26, 2021 meeting minutes of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) as submitted. Hearing none, he asked if anyone had an objection to approving the minutes or abstaining.
- **Motion to APPROVE by Mr. Scanlon. Second by Mr. Nordin. The motion passes unanimously.**

FFY 2021 Obligation Report – for Information and Discussion

- Mr. Mason Perrone, Principal Planner with the Division of Statewide Planning, presented on the FFY 2021 Obligation Report. Per CFR 450.334, “No later than 90 days following the end of the program year, the State, public transportation operator(s), and the MPO shall cooperatively develop a listing of projects for which funds under 23 U.S.C. Chapter 53 were obligated in the preceding program year.” In his presentation, Mr. Perrone provided an overview of the funding breakdown of federal obligations made by RIDOT and RIPTA, highlighted the top 5 largest expenditures of each agency and identified where federal monies were spent. The report is available on the Division of Statewide Planning website at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/planning-areas/transportation/obligated.php>.

TAC Discussion:

- Mr. Wood asked what constitutes the COVID relief funding – are they infrastructure projects? Ms. Cotter, RIDOT, said that the first set of COVID relief funding was a lot of transit money, and reimbursements for data management with the Dept. of Health. Mr. Wood then asked if the funding went toward administrative salaries and wages; or was it for more tangible projects? To which the response was that it did cover some salaries of those that worked on projects, as well as maintenance expenses.

State Management Plan – for Information and Discussion

- Ms. Joelle Kanter, RIPTA Planner, presented on the State Management Plan (last updated in 2018). She explained that RIPTA is responsible for maintaining and updating the State Management Plan which describes objectives, policies, and procedures for administering a number of Federal Transit Administration funding programs. In her presentation, Ms. Kanter provided a background of the Plan, description of formula funds and their application, and summary of the proposed changes. The Plan is available for review at www.RIPTA.com.

TAC Discussion:

- Mr. Walker asked if the Plan allows for new sources of funds to be brought into RIPTA without needing to update the Plan? Mr. Nordin indicated that this Plan is for formula funding and the Plan would need to be amended if additional formula monies were received.

Bus Electrification – for Information and Discussion

- Ms. Sarah Ingle, RIPTA Long Range Planning Director, presented on the Zero-Emissions Vehicle Pilot Program. Ms. Ingle provided a background and overview of the program, phasing of the program (including the current number of zero-emission vehicles and testing protocol), and lessons learned (cost, vehicle range, electricity usage, energy infrastructure, charging infrastructure, weather/temperature impacts, etc.). Ms. Ingle highlighted the benefit of electric vehicles, including the health and equity benefits, and environmental advantages consistent with ongoing statewide initiatives. This is an ongoing project at RIPTA as the agency accumulates and transitions into using electric vehicles and puts them into operation.

TAC Discussion:

- Ms. Mary Parella asked why RIPTA is not utilizing hybrid buses more since they appear to be more resilient (i.e., they have a longer range and do not depend on a electric grid that may go down during storms). Ms. Ingle responded that the benefits of the hybrid buses are in question and the available funding for buses demands zero-emission vehicles. Ms. Parella also wondered if the customer will benefit since RIPTA will need to change the schedules to accommodate the vehicle charging. Ms. Ingle responded that the number of electric buses is a small percentage of the overall fleet but are being deployed in denser communities where the air quality benefits are more tangible. Ms. Ingle also pointed out that RIPTA is slowly transitioning into electric buses. Mr. Greg Nordin added that the vehicle technology is still improving and that RIPTA knows the transition to zero-emissions is imminent.
- Mr. Michael Wood said that current long-term plans do not account for the cost of adopting this new technology and that RIPTA needs to stay on top of the overall long-term costs involved in bus electrification. Ms. Ingle responded that the Fleet and Facilities Action Plan - where the Transit Master Plan, Investment Program and Electrification Program will be looked at - will help to provide an answer as to the cost for adopting this new technology.
- Mr. Jim Moran asked about natural gas buses and Buy America rules (i.e., if foreign made buses may be less expensive). Ms. Ingle said more foreign manufacturers are coming into the market and RIPTA has looked at CNG (compressed natural gas) vehicles.
- Mr. Wood asked if smaller vehicles will also be electrified. Ms. Ingle said there has been a move toward a low and zero-emission vehicle fleet type for flex and paratransit vehicles. Mr. Nordin

- pointed out that smaller electric vehicles are not Buy America compliant, yet.
- Mr. Walker asked about the successfulness of a project, embarked upon by RIPTA and a private company a year and a half ago, that utilized solar panels on diesel buses. Mr. Nordin said that project was successful and that RIPTA is conducting ongoing studies on solar powered vehicles.

Assistant Chief's Staff Report – for Information

- Ms. Linsey Callaghan provided an update on what is new and on-going with the Division including the following:
- A contract was tentatively awarded to a consultant for the Freight Plan update including completing the Truck Parking Analysis for Rhode Island.
- The Division continues to work closely with PMG and ESRI on the E-STIP migration and a demo was given to FHWA about 2 weeks ago. In addition, we are completing additional modifications to the software which are expected to be delivered in December, and hopefully soon after a demo can be provided to the TAC in 2022. The Division also continuing to work with ESRI on the project intake side and have been making good progress.
- The Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) Act was approved by the Biden Administration and provides a significant amount of money for transportation infrastructure in the state to improve safety, resiliency, supply chain, and asset condition.
- Ms. Pam Cotter provided details on the amount of IIJA funding that will be available for Rhode Island. Ms. Cotter also provided details on the state matching funds required to utilize the IIJA funding and how the additional funding will be incorporated into the recently adopted STIP.
- Ms. Callaghan pointed out that the TAC will not meet in December and when the TAC next meets in January, a Chair and Vice Chair will be voted on. Lastly, Ms. Callaghan also recognized and thanked members of the TAC that will no longer be serving.

Public Comment

- Chairman Walker asked if anyone from the public wanted to make comment.
- No public comment was provided.

Announcements

- Ms. Chelsea Siefert announced that the QDC is hiring a Development Services Project Manager.

Adjourn

- Chair Walker thanked everyone for coming and asked for a motion to adjourn the TAC Meeting.
- **Motion made by Mr. Scanlon, Seconded by Mr. Freeman. All in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 6:42 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Linsey Callaghan, Assistant Chief
Secretary to the TAC